

# 4 Men in Their 50's

## Thoughts and Stuff...

What bridge? I'm just looking for that thing :☺

### Discrimination

I tried to find a quote for this chapter but thanks to political correctness couldn't find any that didn't support the prevailing groupthink on the subject ☺

If you don't use your powers of discrimination you're ignoring one of the most powerful tools God gave you and if you rely on others to use their powers of discrimination for you, they surely will!

Everyone should have the right to be discriminating whether it involves a bottle of wine or who to associate with. We're better off using common sense instead of discriminating against a group of people but if someone wants to be that way they should have that right.

It's illegal to be discriminating when renting a house but if things have gone poorly for you with a certain group then anti-discrimination laws are basically telling you it's illegal to apply what you've learned from experience to your business. There's a difference between discriminating based on ethnicity and using past experience as a predictor of future results. Just as we discriminate between good and bad wine by tasting it, we should have the right to select who we deal or associate with based on experience not mandates.

We're told to support the "American Way" but that's changed so much that I must reconsider. I don't particularly feel a part of this new Amerika, so why get all jacked up about supporting it? If it's going to

be a socialist country that discriminates against tax payers, confiscates and redistributes the fruit of our labor why would I want to be their partner in that crime?

I don't support cutting off a thief's hand nor do I support the way we handle criminal activity in this country. There must be something better in between! I agree that as long as there's poverty and discrimination there will be a crime but using those as an excuse is wrong too. There must be a balance between assisting and educating the underprivileged, and protecting the rest of the population from predators.

At risk of being accused of wanting to spread discrimination into space like some southerners wanted to spread slavery to western states, I'll say I don't see it that way. There should be freedom of association in space, instead of the kind of government and elitist *prescribed* diversity current in vogue here. Big brother, nanny states and societal engineering are fine for those who want it but as individuals guaranteed; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness we should resist those who would define, prescribe and regulate these *on our behalf*.

I seek freedom of association and freedom from having to explain why I want it. Everyone should have the right to use their *powers of discrimination* and past experiences to determine who to associate with and who to say good riddance to.

The key point is the desire for freedom of association not discrimination, although people have been taught to link the two... Racism also isn't relevant especially if we don't consider ourselves superior to anyone else.

What if you're a landlord and most renters of a particular group acted like rent was optional? You're not allowed to discriminate but you'd be foolish not to take the past history into account... but that's probably illegal!

We're allowed to be discriminating when it comes to religion, food or drink but we're taught that we must associate with anyone who foists themselves upon us. Not only must we do business with everyone, the law compels us to give people the fruit of our labor even if they're utterly indolent. That's government interference on a massive and unjust scale. If someone comes with coin in hand you should sell them what they want unless of course it's a rope to hang you.

Evidently this view's unacceptable to society which insists that we don't discriminate period... All I can say is don't coerce and I won't discriminate. The flip side is me accepting everyone else's right to exclude me from their activities...

I may be called a racist but I don't call myself superior to anyone so the charge is false. I do however believe in a person's right to be discriminating when it comes to who they'll associate with, especially when no government funds are involved. I simply prefer the company of certain people and I feel we're bombarded with images and messages designed to *encourage* us to associate with certain people... you may not mind that but I do. What's wrong with generally preferring the company of people who like me are 2% Neanderthal ☺

## Co-optation

Dictionary definition; “to assimilate, take, or win over into a larger or established group: The fledgling Labor party was coopted by the Socialist party.”

It's sad when individuals allows themselves to be co-opted by someone who *guilts* them into thinking they are morally bankrupt if they don't accept that persons viewpoint.

The word *cooperation* brings to mind the word co-optation. The former usually positive the latter usually isn't.

It's significant that we have expressions like “theatre of war” and “fighting season” both of which are often applied to Afghanistan. War's so ingrained in our culture and language that we use the same terminology for it as we do for sports and entertainment, which makes me wonder if that's what we consider it! *Spoils of war's* also interesting and I wonder if originally we were after the neighboring tribe's *perishables*. War mongers find that catchy phrases are effective in attracting impressionable, martyrs and cannon fodder.

Talk show hosts sometimes admit they are entertainers but not that they are *performance artists*, which is more accurate. Entertainers may drive home points, pontificate and further agendas but they're aim is supposedly to make us laugh. The gurus of the airwaves are undoubtedly more interested in co-opting listeners, furthering an agenda and issuing marching orders ☹

If you're being shamed into something give it further thought before complying... are you doing it because it's right or because you're being shamed?

## God and Religion

“He take the thunder from the mountain, he take the lightning from the sky,

He bring the strong man to his begging knee, he make the young girl's mama cry.

He make the river call your lover, he make the barking of the hound" ... John Fogerty

**"To be free to romp like the mind of God" ... The Great Gatsby (slightly revised)**

"All religion, my friend, is simply evolved out of fraud, fear, greed, imagination, and poetry" ... Edgar Allan Poe

"Art, like religion, was there to console those who were heartbroken by life" ... Van Gogh biographer

"Philosophy, is the talk on a cereal box. Religion, is a smile on a dog" ... Edie Brickell Yet it rules our lives!

I don't believe in; a master race, a chosen people, a superior religion, a hereditary nobility, overbearing government, majority *lording* by virtue of their numbers, or a class made princely by money or anything else.

There used to be a company called Guaranteed Overnight Delivery that used the abbreviation "G.O.D." on the trucks. I haven't seen them on the road in a few years but did see one in a junk yard yesterday. Maybe they were too big for their britches, or they might still be around somewhere.

God as I see him is a creative, orderly, positive intelligence that lasts forever... longer than planets and universes. He was here before the big bang and will be around long after our universe goes down the drain of a black hole or whatever. Whether he's bearded and wears a white robe depends on your persuasion or imagination... so is the claim that he's male but that's how I see him.

The Reggae band sings, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords rules us all" but is the *Rastafari* King of Kings the same as the "American" Jesus or does Haile Selassie have something to do with it... and to whom does it matter?

Is the history of the world just God putting on a dinner theatre production for his guests? The several thousand years of human history covered would seem like an eternity to us but God and his guests may experience time differently than us... Act I, Act II and grand finale! God could have a trillion shows going on at once in the vastness of the universes or this theory could be an extension of what the Greeks and Romans thought. Jews and Christians could have borrowed the concept from their predecessors and contemporaries or this time it might all be true.

They say God's unlikely to burden you with more than you can handle but they forget to say, we tend to bite off more than we can chew.

What does it mean that after this world passes away God will create a new earth with no more sea? Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

I believe there probably is a God, quite possibly eternal life, judgment etc. What I have an issue with is the exclusivity of the religionists, their insistence that they own the rights, the patents and the trademarks to God. Meanwhile they've obviously borrowed from the Egyptians for Proverbs, from the Mesopotamians for Noah and then there are the inconsistencies, the errors, omissions and other strange and sometimes non-sensical things... hmm.

If everyone converted to religion A, B or C would this be a peaceful world? Maybe but I doubt it, most likely human nature would have us at each other's throats in short order. If one religion "took over" would it grant human rights, freedom and equality? That I doubt as well and whoever's in charge would fall prey to the corruption of power, there'd be schisms and the usual cycle of war would loom large. An example of one religion ruling and peace not reigning would be the hundreds of years that the Catholic church was the only one allowed in Europe... seems to me there were quite a few wars during that time. If however Jesus for example came back with his rod of iron, maybe things would be different... a few people are holding their breath but I'm not sure I believe he's ever coming back. In the meantime his minions neither by hook or by crook seem able to keep the peace.

Funny how you could take the most impressive structures ever built; the pyramids, Five Gorges Dam, the Burj Khalifa or anything else we've built for form or function and drop it in an ocean trench and it would be like a speck.

~~I believe God can be as personal as he wants think he's been personal in his interaction to me, albeit via somewhat impersonal means.~~

Religion is the ultimate team sport but should it be? The coaches and directors of each religion are hell bent on their competition and from what I've seen of them on a personal level, they're believers in Lombardi's philosophy that "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." They may very well believe they're saving your soul and that they have license to do almost anything to do so but they also tend to turn nasty when things don't go their way.

If you're *starting point* is that you're chosen over all others, you're likely to have a strained relations with your neighbors. While not utterly rejecting such claims, I do have a healthy skepticism of them, whether they come from *royalist or* religionists.

On our way to church as a family for the first time in months... my wife *might* say I'm just going so I can get *new material* and she's partly right... certainly I expect the preacher to provide grist for the mill ☺

Lately I prefer reading and writing about religion to discussing it because we've entered another one of those ages when those who don't accept the paradigm are having a rough time. It seems there're only occasional times in history when a fellow can think for himself and not get in trouble!

You can't aspire to be another Franklin or Washington without being accused of delusions of grandeur. The most we're allowed is to be like our favorite teacher, which is fine but aim higher and the *hammer* might nail you ☺

In addition to possibly speaking through roadsigns, God may also speak through songs... at the moment he's using the Eagles to say "Take it Easy."

~~Why should I believe your religion? Because in a nutshell if you do you go to heaven and if you don't you go to hell... how convenient a theory, or to so many a truth!~~

~~So God might be *simply* the *laws and order* of the universe or as personal a God as he wants to be. I'm voting for number two but have scant hard evidence of *my own* to *prove it*.~~

Relativity, "M" theory, singularity, quantum mechanics, string theory and quarks may not reveal God but they broaden the discussion. We're as earth centric as the men who imprisoned Galileo but they didn't know about; black holes, parallel universes, 11 dimensions, **Big Bangs** and infinity... so at least they had an excuse. *Enormity* suggests that in the greater scheme of things, the life span of earth isn't even a split second in time... but that shouldn't contradict God counting every hair on your head.

Organized religion? I find it as scary as the next guy just not as convincing.

~~They say the universe started from a tiny dot of matter and that it's been expanding ever since. Maybe the universe is like a body and a black hole is like a boil, you can't see much of it but the other side is enormous. Like a boil blowing out a black hole could explode an overstuffed old universe through the hole into a new "space." That could be your big bang and how that tiny "spot" is where the universe was created from... it may have come from another bloated universe with no more space for expansion. Understanding the world is like assembling a puzzle with an infinite number of pieces. If it only had 100 we'd have figured it out, if it had a million it could be figured out. With an infinite number of pieces we'll never completely understand it but there've always been are self-appointed puzzle masters claiming to have all the answers.~~

I think religions have a family tree that looks like the man's family tree of man with dead ends and many branches. Hopefully it doesn't look like the dinosaur tree, which except for birds may have been an evolutionary dead end. Funny how all that's left of those lumbering dinosaurs are hollow boned birds which are in a sense lighter than air and a good future model for the ponderous religions of today. I don't think we'll figure out God but we may figure out religion, at least where they came from and how they're connected.

As far as I know, neither the Bible or anyone or anything else gives a straight answer about who or what God is. They offer what appear to me to be self-serving, sometimes contradictory statements and scriptures that prove little if anything, so *why not* examine other sources? Could we have been visited by extraterrestrials and did our ancestors consider them Gods? Reportedly the Spanish conquistadors enjoyed such status on a local level, imagine the status an advanced "race" of extraterrestrials might

have achieved thousands of years ago! There could have been good ones and bad ones, we may have been seeded or interbreed with etc... the possibilities and implications are endless. For certain however, many ancient civilizations allude to such things, from Greek Gods to Bible characters to Sumerians, Hindus, Chinese and various indigenous people worldwide. Throw burning bushes, chariots of fire and all the rest in the pot and you get quite a stew!

I believe God could be anything from human looking to equations and natural laws, this question is beyond my comprehension. What I don't believe is that the earth is 6,000 or 10,000 years old because it conflicts with carbon dating the fossil record and everything in between... this is not beyond human comprehension, but many refuse to consider anything but what they've been told to consider. I think science trumps religion on the age of the earth but neither satisfies me when it comes to trying to explain the nature of God.

It's been a while since I've been asked, "are you a Christian?" My answer is maybe and that leads to the usual "if you died tonight do you know where you'd go?" I've asked Jesus to be my savior and been baptized but according to most churches that's not quite good enough, so maybe I'm not a Christian and in any case the inquisitor usually answers the question for me as per his understanding of the Bible. I haven't received any signs from Jesus so I'm content for the moment... on my deathbed it could be another story, especially if surrounded by pestering evangelists!

Religion's great for keeping everyone acting *civilized* at least until something happens that really gets the adrenalin flowing, then it's Katy bar the door! All the fancy talk goes out the window, primitive instinct takes over and the gloves come off... very, very sad.

When we go to church we leave in a more orderly manner than when the kids were with us... we're still in a rush but not in a huff.

Is it better to have a system where you go to confession to atone for sins, one where you pray to the savior for forgiveness, or something else? Guess they're all better than nothing but they seem to make getting off the hook so easy...if not automatic.

Is God a murder mystery buff, or is it the devil that causes all this trouble? Why would God be interested in murder mysteries if he already knows who done it? It's all very baffling and the stock answers provided by the apologists make little sense to me... not that it matters. I'm told we have to stand before God and be judged, which isn't much different than the ancient Egyptians belief that our heart would be weighed and if heavier than a feather, we'd be devoured by a crocodile monster... hmm. Near death experiences aren't conclusive but they tend not to support the old stories either... I'm guessing the old timers who wrote the book had even less experience with near death stories than we do.

One thing remains the same from ancient times till now, most people have a *God shaped hole* in our heart and most are content to accept the dominant paradigm. We're consumers not seekers and as long as we're promised good or threatened with bad, we accept the cult of the day... life's easier that way.

~~The discovery via ancient near-death experiences that there may be life after death was astounding but religionists/theologues' patent and trademarking of it for profit was a dismal but predictable manifestation of human nature and man's greed. It would be like physicists today patenting the theories of parallel universes and multiple dimensions... which someone will get around to soon enough.~~

~~I think miracles and revelations are possible but greatly over reported...~~

Did angels have sex with humans? Might Mary have been artificially inseminated? Were there competing aliens each claiming to be God? Such is alluded to in ancient myths, legends and scriptures and someday our amnesia may come to an end!

Is "ye must be born again" literal or just a recommendation and can it be done in fits and starts? From what I've heard, you must be born again per a certain prescription, which happens to vary from church to church....hmm.

~~Arguably your religion is the best, at least it doesn't preach conversion at the point of a sword, killing the competition or killing those who wish to leave your cult. You have much highly effective ways of winning converts including: eternal peace or damnation, wells, medical assistance and other charitable works. This is wonderful, but I still see yours as primarily the dominant world cult, based largely on superstition, unproven claims as well as hijacking twisting of at least some of Jesus' message.~~

~~There is possible plagiarism (proverbs etc.), there is disagreement with the historical and scientific record on one side and promises and threats on the other... hmmm. So privately I have to wonder if this is real or just a big story? This generation has too many radicals who are armed and dangerous to make a big deal of it... maybe in a hundred years people will be ready for a rational conversation.~~

There are people who only act civilized out of fear of God and some who aren't even deterred by that. To make it even wackier, they're people dying to do "God's" dirty work. There're also situations where thanks to human nature even the most non-violent need to fear damnation to stay on the straight and narrow. Could it be that the threat of eternal punishment is necessary to keep some semblance of peace?

~~The two things that get me about Christianity is difficulty in believing many of the stories and paraphrasing Gandhi about Christians, I'd like to meet one. Yes, of course Christians are off the hook as far as having to be perfect, grace takes care of that but in my experience they seem no more graceful and magnanimous than any other religious group is a downer. Their espousements are one thing but their apparent self-righteous actions are something else. I get the first part, because everyone seems to espouse grandiose things per their religion, their faith and their movement but the actions of Christians seem to me to be as loaded with greed, avarice and hegemony as any bear in the woods.~~

As far as generosity which Christians often exhibit, is their altruism "motivated self-interest" and does it matter? How does the above compare to philanthro-capitalism by which Zuckerman, Gates and others create markets for their products while "fighting the good fight."



Okay... yours may be the gold standard of religions and you're free to convert the entire world. I just hope you never *completely* succeed because there should be a free and open market in religion like other *commodities*. Wouldn't a world with just one religion be that much closer to one with only one government, one race etc. I prefer diversity ☺

~~Why would I believe in any religion that says it's there way or the highway? I'm more likely to subscribe to one that's not monopolistic... after all their evidence seems sketchy and self-serving to some of us.~~

~~Christianity is wonderful but like any religion it has a lunatic fringe. These folks come in handy when the movement feels threatened... they'll do the dirty work and the elites can say things like, "isn't that sad" and "it wasn't us."~~

Arguably Christianity and Islam have a harder time coexisting with other religions than those that don't insist they're the only way and that they must do their darndest to convert non-believers. These religions have been the cause of most religious wars in the west and the middle-east and seemingly can't coexist on a *fundamentalist level*. At times these warrior religions have lived together mostly in peace but lately they've both fanned the flames enough to ignite jihads and crusades and possibly drag humanity to an apocalyptic showdown...

I believe God *could* use the threat of hell to reach mankind and that man always has and always will use that threat and does so at the drop of a hat.

~~According to the TV special "History of the World in Two Hours", the five great world religions were all established during approximately the same era. I don't know about that, but they are all old, likely based on myths and superstition and possibly outdated.~~

Who in their right mind would not wager as Pascal did or accept the writings of C.S. Lewis? Try as I might and realizing the danger, I cannot discount the scientific and historical record. These I find more convincing than stories of Arks, talking bushes and miracles. Neither, however can I discount the warnings and threats in the Bible, so I tip toe uncomfortably back and forth across the line in the sand. I'm not sure if I'm thoughtful and brave, or foolish and vain... my friends however inform me I'm the latter.

Actually Pascal's choice is far from ridiculous... since there are so many unknowns it allegedly takes the risk out of eternity, with no penalty if he's wrong. Maybe there should be Pascal's choice with an \* for those who aren't completely on board... is that really different than accepting his choice in general?

~~Getting religion, especially a peaceful one is still the best way for a scoundrel to reform and become a better member of society. Rogues readily relate to the~~

~~promise of heaven and the threat of hell and their hard hearts turn to butter. The problem's when they go too far in doing God's will as they or their leaders see it and end up causing as much harm as they had pre-conversion. The average rascal however poses minimal risk to society once they've joined a peaceful cult, so save as many as you can! Nonviolent, thoughtful people benefit as well from joining the dominant cults, except when like the scalawags, they too get caught up in forcing their religion on those who want to be left in peace.~~

I'm not remotely smart enough to know if God's an equation, chemical reaction, law of nature or man with a beard. I consider these and other *theories* possible and have no idea which is the least remote or the most likely. There is however plenty of people who've figured it out and are anxious to share their enlightenment with you.

~~The apostolic church service was beautiful today, but I'm still not convinced that there's only one way to worship God and even less convinced that I experienced it today.~~

Islam calls for submission and Christianity calls for obedience... how far apart are these two? Not very... as a *good* Muslim and a *good* Christian both do what they're told.

If conservative Christians tend to side with business and the military, does it mean those institutions are doing God's work? Undeniably my premise could be wrong because many conservative Christians side with neither of these.

I don't think its weird God left things a bit murky instead of abundantly clear. If he made it crystal clear and everyone converted, how would he separate the wheat from the chaff? Moreover, some convert out of fear or due to Pascal's choice... so does God consider our motive for conversion?

The church says the husband should be the spiritual head of the family but seems to qualify that by saying only holds true if he sticks to their teachings. Judging by who fills the pews, I'd say it's women who chooses the family's church. The wife *tactfully* allows her husband to be the spiritual head of the family, as long as he does so to her liking! If he doesn't conform to the pastor's orders it's another strike against him and as they say... three strikes you're out!

This shouldn't stand since the church is an artificial construct and it's a power grab to demand the husband obey the wife's religious beliefs or be deposed. Husbands heading the family is older than the church and the wife should not control the man or the family's spiritual life. It's a disgrace to be relegated to the back seat of the bus for not submitting to the leaders the wife bows to.

Many *saved* people live more moral lives but others simply feel more entitled than ever. After all, now they're closer to God and if not *better*, they're taught that they're *better off* than the unwashed, which to me is splitting hairs and leads to excesses of every kind imaginable.

The Unitarian church services I've attended rarely touch on the great questions of life, death and the *hereafter*. Maybe it's because they don't believe in one and though they talk about stopping war they don't agitate for peace nearly as much as they do for special GLBT rights. They're as intolerant as any religion and seem as certain of their righteousness as anyone else! Where they differ is in their method and with what they want to do with their neighbors treasure once they've obtained it. While the Christians seem to believe they have the right to conquer and keep the plunder as long as they give a chunk to the poor, the Unitarians would prefer to conquer through more *civilized* means and then redistribute the wealth according to their own formula.

Funny how a back slid Christian and a back slid Unitarian are opposite in so many ways. A back slid Christian may have Unitarian tendencies and vice versa!

~~From day one thousands of years ago, the hens have clucked with approval when the main man stood on the rock and raged against the infidel, who could be anyone from the folks in the next village to the guy competing for a woman he liked. The roosters meanwhile have always bent to peer pressure and the desire to be that man on the rock. A healthy dose of fire and brimstone and fair warning about eternal damnation for those who don't toe the line has always been effective in quieting the masses.~~

In addition to saving everyone's soul, the leading religions are out to conquer the world. This seems to appeal to their foot soldiers, lieutenants and generals... it doesn't appeal to those who'd just like some peace and quiet.

They approach the truth as if they have the; copywrites, patents and trademarks locked in a safe to which only they have the combination... I beg to differ.

~~I think I have more people razing me than most... like everyone I have God's judgment to be concerned about, but on top of that I have the religious establishment's judgment to contend with. I can say I don't care about the latter, but that doesn't negate the fact that they are formidable and if they want to cause me grief, they can do so in spades. Since ninety percent belong to their society's dominant religious establishment, it's pretty hard not to tee a lot of people off when you speak your mind on the subject... not least of all friends and family.~~

With science new questions lead to a quest for new answers... with religion there're can't be *new* answers, so there should be no questions!

I'd love to hear a preacher suggest that we stop bombing people for a year to see if things get any better but such a moratorium would never fly.

Tribulation, pre-tribulation, post tribulation... come on guys, make up your minds! Supporters of both make their case and the sheeple embrace one then the other depending on the times.

~~Can something be *against your religion* if your religion doesn't have a name? Mine doesn't but my church does.~~

Having been written by the winners history books are open to interpretation, so what's wrong with thinking that holy books have the same problem? Theologues say their books are the word of God yet they don't hold up to studious examination, which may be why they discourage such scrutiny by their flock. I seek independent accounts of saviors and religions but few exist, mostly due to the efforts of religionists to eradicate anything that challenges their accounts of events that may never have occurred!

~~The "problem" with religious freedom without separation of church and state is that religious freedom alone ends up with the majority religion ruling the nation and the likelihood of religious wars increasing as well, as the majority religionists/theologues use their influence to direct foreign policy. Its too bad the founding fathers didn't address the issue of church and state more thoroughly. Our foreign policy is currently directed by Tel Aviv and the men in our pulpits... as far as I know, that's not what the founding fathers would have liked... but they're just a bunch of dumb dead white guys right?~~

You say don't accept the Gnostic, Mormon or other gospels, only the ones that Constantine's minion came up with... but they have no more hard evidence behind them than the others.

~~You lecture others on morality, but think its fine to bomb people to achieve your goals, which usually involve oil and religion... your flock, which also claims the moral high ground votes overwhelmingly for bombing those who won't submit. If they won't come to heel... you're intent on hastening them to hell. You are ideologues and zealots and should be ignored or restrained as much as those you detest and wish to destroy... we are all people, all sinners and all equal.~~

I no more believe that the Gnostic and apocryphal writings are completely bogus than that the Canonized writings are the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I respect those who are dedicated to the daunting task of flushing the actual truth out of all of these. It appears to that much of the apocryphal writings are *fanciful* but I think the same of the canon.

~~For me even religion is a bell curve... some days I'm up and some days I'm down.~~

They claim they alone accept those who society has rejected but modern society doesn't even cull murderers so who are they talking about? I wonder if a religion that embraces murderers is more interested in growing its numbers than anything else. They demand repentance but even that can be done endlessly, allowing the faithful to sin endlessly as long as they keep apologizing... I just don't get it.

Matthew 5:28 "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This makes some sense but what if someone can't make love without fantasizing about someone else? Is it better to let the marriage bed lie fallow than to fantasize, since fantasizing seems to be equated with adultery. Should a person pray for forgiveness after fantasizing? There'd be a lot of praying if the answer's yes and there's nothing wrong with that ☺

Funny but religion seems to have more in common with rooting for the home team than with worshipping God...

Did we evolve from lower forms of life, did God make us out of rib bones and dirt, did the flood occur, did Noah take the animals two by two? What am I to believe? In Brazil alone there are over 200 species of monkeys, worldwide 40,000 spider species and over 1 million known animal species... quite a load for Noah and family. For those who declare the Bible must be taken literally and that it's inerrant, the good books various inconsistencies make their whole premise more or less fall to pieces for some people. When I look at the Bible as a book of wisdom and history, it holds up better as a respected guide book but not as our God.

Maybe God is the good side of the laws of nature, physics and chemistry and the devil's the bad side of these. I know that theory won't fly but I'm mentioning it anyway ☺ God builds, nurtures and rules justly and the devil is entropy, rust and disorder. The caveat is that life is built upon humus from dead organisms that have preceded us. We must it seems perish so that new life can be created and nourished... hmmm.

In Matthew 4:4 Jesus says, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." In Ezekiel 4:16 that prophet said, "...I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they eat bread by weight, and with care..." So is bread the staff of life or do we not live on bread alone? I'm guessing it's somewhere in between and not really a Biblical inconsistency. On the other hand what about all the bad press gluten and wheat products are getting lately?

Speaking of prophets, along with those of the Bible I find the prophets of science fiction equally compelling....

Why do you ask me what I *think of it*, if what I think of it is damnable and heretical unless I think what your religion tells me to *think*? Are you luring me into a conversation designed to make me join your team or ruin my day? I guess that's worked on us sheeple since time immemorial. You say you're doing it to save my soul but I don't need glasses to recognize the old bait and switch when I see it. I'm not saying the intentions of the average religionist is bad but using pseudo history to scare the daylights out of people is cruel and unusual punishment.

It's interesting that story of Noah is taken seriously by a billion or more people, while the Epic of Gilgamesh if known about at all is usually dismissed as complete mythology. This despite Abraham having coming from the culture and region from whence the epic was recorded and it being very similar to Noah's later story. Maybe people should be looking for Gilgamesh's boat on mount Ararat too.

There are reportedly 7,000 species of amphibians alone... I guess Noah didn't need to house them on his ark. Not to mention the estimated 12 million tons of waste generated daily, forget about his family shoveling it, the ark would sink... unless of course there was some clever or supernatural way of eliminating it which of course there was.

Although not always right, especially during the *first go round*, science allows revision and reform unlike organized religion which only allows rectification when its back is squarely against the wall... just ask Galileo Galilei. Funny how his name is similar to the place Jesus came from... I wonder what Galileo thought about that?

Men do *whatever needs to be done* to be to get what they're after and women of the utmost character fake *things*, so why should I be surprised that people might fake other things. I'm not saying everyone's faking tongues but I have heard of at least one person admitting faking because of the pressure to perform. Sure, tonguespeakers *may* be filled with the Holy Spirit but I can't help wondering if consciously or otherwise some are just hedging their bets.

As far as I know few if any of the founding fathers spoke in tongues, so are they going to hell? I think speaking in tongues was rare prior to the establishment of the apostolic movement in about 1900. Does that mean the billions who lived died prior to then are toasting or was there a special dispensation since the movement had yet to be founded?

Call me jaded but even a good shepherd's ultimate reason for protecting his sheep is so they can be shorn or slaughtered for profit. He takes good care of them but ultimately leads them to their demise.

~~If there have been X million Apostolic Pentacostals in the world since the founding of the movement a hundred and some years ago, one might be able to estimate the population of heaven. I think they teach that only tongue speakers Christians go there, so add the sum of all Apostolic Pentacostals to the sum of other Christians that have spoken in tongues over the millennia and you get XX million... perhaps indicating that heaven has the "population" of a large city, or small country.~~

~~So prior to about 1910 and the establishment of the modern Pentecostal movement did 99% of people the world over go to hell? Now is it merely 90% that automatically go south... really?~~

Apostolics are generally nice people so why haven't any witnessed to me? I don't know if I'm unworthy, or something else but if it's essential to speak in tongues, why aren't they trying harder to save the rest of us? Do they feel between a rock and a hard place? If they try too hard do they risk turning people off and might that dissuade them from making projects of every Tom, Dick and Harry that comes along?

After two hours in the music festival I whispered to my wife that I'd meet her outside and left. She loves the music and the participants are talented but to me the songs are repetitious and loud as a rock concert. The man behind me was speaking loudly in tongues and his pew pounding shook my seat. I appreciate that he's "in the spirit" but that didn't make my head hurt any less. Making my way to the car I drove a block to Dairy Queen but they had just closed. I parked back in the church lot turned on the radio and then remembered that Led Zep was in the CD player... say what you will but I think that's better music!

Is it true of my Arab side what Genesis 16:12 says, "he shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." I hope not! Likewise is it true that as it says of our brothers the Jews in Deuteronomy 7:6, "thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

~~After last night's service when about 60 young people from the Bible college began speaking in tongues, more or less in unison, I again had to wonder about peer pressure, fitting in, group mentality and mass hysteria. If you want to be accepted by the group, it seems you'd be wise to do what the person next to you is doing and if you don't, are you considered a baby Christian compared to your peers?~~

I also wondered if there are pre-Christian examples of people speaking in tongues?

**People from older cultures seem less concerned with the end of the world than newer societies like ours. Maybe it's because one way or another *the end's* happened to them repeatedly while we've yet to experience it for the first time!**

~~Worldwide church of God Herbert W. Armstrong~~

~~Just as I think its possible to disagree with Zionism without denouncing Judaism, I think I can disagree with the Unitarians without denouncing them and their church which I consider it as legitimate as any. Neither do I feel compelled to renounce any affiliation with that church, because I was a juvenile when I attended and compelled to do so by my parents. I don't think my parent's membership made me a member, because as soon as I had the freedom not to attend, I stopped going there. I am grateful however that the Unitarian church has given my father and to some degree my mother a church community to belong to.~~

I was surprised to see the Unitarian Church included in a book about cults at the Christian book store. I'm not a Unitarian but consider it as legitimate as any other church. It was enlightening to see which other religious movements were also listed as cults and even more enlightening to see which were not!

~~Since I don't fit into the Unitarian church or any of the Christian churches my wife has belonged to, I have established the online and unaffiliated Church of the Golden Rule... which worships the God of all creation, not according to the dogma of any established religion. I am neither Gnostic or agnostic... I am a believer in God, but I'm not a believer in the traditional churches.~~

~~I'd like to offer a free membership to the founding fathers... not that they'd accept, but they'd certainly be welcome.~~

~~I'm becoming more skeptical of tongues, or perhaps returning to my original skepticism. Those who admittedly fake other things might fake tongues too...~~



~~So are Christian tongues and charismatic ecstasy any more genuine than the wild gyrations and fits of "heathens" the world over? Its not nice to say, but I'm guessing that God alone knows, not the witch doctors or evangelists.~~

~~If the earth was once completely covered with ice as a few scientists believe, why couldn't it have been covered with flood waters?~~

~~Have I heard of missionaries using "bait and switch" tactics... hmmm?~~

I wonder what kind of death experience Hitler had? Is it possible or even likely that as he faded away, he was met by his mother or some other loved one on the other side? Geez, talk about something being crazy and unfair to his victims!

~~They say you can't be saved, or legitimately spiritual in nature unless you accept their brand and their list of rules. This is an effective way of keeping people's nose to the church grindstone, but no way to encourage an honest search for the truth. If you do nothing but accept the teachings of "church men", will you ever get or take the chance to truly seek God's face?~~

~~So what is a personal God? You say everyone must believe in your definition of one to be saved. Do we have to accept your definition and your intermediaries? Is the only way to pray through Jesus, or is Mary an acceptable proxy too and what about a direct approach, any chance that might work... try it if you dare!~~

~~The Apostle Paul in his letter mentions a priestly class... was he a proponent of one?~~

~~You say the "heathen" should be glad we toppled their gods and brought them into the modern world. You say they can look back on the "good old days" if they want to but that consisted mostly of disease and degradation for them. That may be true to some extent and in some cases to a great extent, but not everyone wants to spend their mornings on a ribbon of asphalt going to an office cubicle or factory floor. On the other hand it seems that most people in the developing world do want flat screens, cell phones, credit cards and big Macs... not to mention clean water, longer life spans and the right not to be traded for baskets and pigs.(This might be better off in "Tribes" chapter)~~

I hope we can at least coexist, because there will always be people who are into the supernatural, be it religion, clairvoyance etc. and others who are into science and rationality. In the middle are millions of people who are interested in both ends of this spectrum and not entirely convinced by either... some people are content with the factory selected ring tone, others prefer downloading a different one. As long as we're not trying conquer or forcibly convert everyone else, there's an excellent chance we can get along... society should preclude such action via separation of church and state.

**So what's ruder, holy rollers telling people they're going to hell because they won't or their targets making fun of the holy rollers for not fitting in with the majority? The rollers might say rudeness has nothing to do with it because they have a responsibility to offer the gift of the Holy Spirit to others. I think the rudest thing is accusing someone of being "of the devil" if they don't agree with one's version of the truth. It's also an effective way of**

**silencing people and inciting the rabid sheep to violence. It maybe your *calling* and obligation to *warn* people they're going to burn in hell if they don't follow your lead but it's still rude and obnoxious. If you are right and are truly saving souls, then rudeness is irrelevant but if you're not spot on, then you've done no service to and have been a pain in the rear to those you encounter.**

Why is it that an addict can quit the pipe, bottle or needle through the power of the holy spirit? I don't want to quibble but I think one addition's being substituted for another... granted, being addicted to religion is usually better to drugs or alcohol. There are people who are susceptible to addiction and they need something to be obsessed with and for such people religion should be their drug and their mission field might best be other addicts.

~~I consider all life to have some value and all human life to be sacred. That being said, I have no problem swatting a fly or poisoning a rat... people on the other hand should not be harmed except as a last resort to save others, or to cull the worst of the worst who have murdered in cold blood. It will not bring back their victims, but if there's a chance it will dissuade others from committing murder it is appropriate.~~ Should be in Law and order

The King James version says Goliath was over nine feet tall but the much older Dead Sea scrolls has Goliath at between six and seven feet tall... hmm.

~~"Well, the Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us; it binds the galaxy together"...~~ Obi-Wan Kenobi

~~It's going to far to say theologues are only interested in power... they're also concerned with surviving.~~

~~Not that anyone cares, but I don't particularly like attending church and especially Bible study with women. Just as they have influenced politics profoundly, they are having the same affect on spirituality. They are generally more superstitious then men and more willing to suspend their adult faculties when told to do so by their religious leaders. I agree they can also enrich everything from Bible study to politics, but when religious and political leaders have to pander to them, then men's rights and adult thinking suffers.~~

You won't find religious or political leaders admitting they pander to anyone... that's not good for business and like most people they're interested in keeping their jobs!

Women imply that they are intuitive, Godly and spiritual... after all, they show up at church in greater numbers. On the flip side they show up at fortune tellers more often too, to me they're just a bit more superstitious than men.

If in most people's opinion there're very few good reasons for religious wars, why are there so many of them?

When you admit you don't have all the answers, you lose the audience. What people want are answers... right or wrong they want answers!

The preacher said, “there can be no ambiguity!”, you’re either with him or against him and to his flock that means with God or against him. He’s unequivocal about who’s side he’s on and who’s side God is on... but that’s not how everyone sees it. He sounds to me like the manager firing up his salesmen... in order to sell you have to be fervent and in order to keep the flock together they have to be under his control. The game’s gone on since the dawn of time... salesmen masquerading as God’s earthly emissaries.

Mob mentality and peer pressure is at work in this church. How can one man stay seated when everyone else rises on cue? How can you question his authority, when he maintains so strongly that it comes from God? How can I be anything but miserable and disappointed in my fellow men when I see them so caught up in the spectacle and so unwilling to use their brains? Yes, there’s a time to think like a child but mostly we should think like the adults we are! This isn’t unique to churches, surely it’s the same in mosques, temples and anywhere people gather to worship. It’s gone on since time immemorial, starting with shamans and priests yelling from caves and hilltops and it may never stop.

Can a so called “personal God” work through; street signs, coincidences, déjà vus, mathematics, probability, random chance, dreams, etc. or does he just talk to the faithful? The evangelists and others point to the latter but for the rest of us other forms of “communication” is more common.

If your ideas are out of line with the status quo and your nose isn’t *to their grindstone*, you’re accused of grandiosity but what would have happened if the founding fathers had submitted to their English masters?

Disney World is telling Muslim women they can not wear head scarves to work... so what about people wearing crosses, stars of David or other religious necklaces? Why is the scarf prohibited, is it because of its religious meaning? Its not like a full face veil that might conceal someone’s face and even that should be a free choice.

We would do well to weed out the terrorists on both sides... some incite suicide bombings and others lobby for drone attacks, I see less difference than you say I should.

Christianity and Islam have always been at odds. Unlike Judaism which I think is still waiting for their Messiah, Christianity and Islam both claim he’s been here but the kicker is they were different men. Not that Judaism gets a “by”... they’ve certainly had their

**problems with these religions. All three are also inherently militant and none seem particularly interested in coexistence.**

What if come the judgment day and we find out that voting for leaders that fomented religious wars was not as righteous as we were told it was? What if we find out these religious wars were in fact an outrage to God?

You see a timber in my eye and not so much as a mote in your's... hmmm.

Construction equipment at the Islamic center Tennessee has been vandalized and a Muslim cabbie in NYC has been slashed by a passenger who asked him what religion he was. When the founding fathers proclaimed this a land of religious freedom, did they mean free as long as it's a Christian denomination? I know they were aware of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and probably other religions as well... did they not anticipate that these would someday arrive on our shores? I doubt it...my lay interpretation of their intentions is that they wanted to guarantee religious freedom for everyone.

Whether it's apologetics, archaeology, creation, the earth being at the center of the universe, the flood or anything else involving science, religionists go to great lengths to dispute; physics, fossil records and anything else that may cast doubts on their theology. I'm not saying there is no God just that their versions are strange! And always up their sleeve is the trump card of damnation and inquisition when society lets them get away with it. I'll take an archaeologist over an archbishop and a founding father over a church father any day... but don't follow either blindly.

If you're not convinced of something in their holy books, they accuse you of hating their religion. This is baloney and a powerful tool they use to marginalize and dehumanize people who are not convinced that their books hold all the answers. They don't do nuance and love to draw lines in the sand, separating themselves from those they consider damned, despicable, unfortunate and "fair game" for pillage and plunder. Of course they make a minor effort to save you before making a major effort to destroy and dispossess you!

God, the force, or whatever you call him/her/it, is constantly giving us little warnings. When heeded they result in a better life, when ignored they result in splinters and splatters.

I see proselytizers as being somewhat like the whale war gang... they're going to tell you how you have to live, based on their ideology. What if people from India came here and harassed our farmers to keep them from slaughtering cows for our cheese burgers? And why aren't the "shepherds" harassing Africans for eating Chimpanzees?

From time to time, despots try to trump the laws of God and nature and set themselves above all else... in the long run it never works!

So what's worse... blasphemy or heresy? I think they used to burn people at the stake for either and some would have us return to those days.

~~Is fire and brimstone preaching basically a way to trigger a mob mentality response from the audience. Many listeners become excited or incited, while the few who don't go along, are left scared and confused. It's easier to *incite a mob* when you're ranting than when you're speaking in a normal tone of voice... that helps explain why religious leaders have been known to rant and rave.~~

What about non-believers who seem to live Christ-like lives? I think the church teaches they will be "spit out of his mouth" the same as non-believers who misbehave. Believers however seem to have an excellent chance of making heaven *to some extent* regardless of behavior. Those who don't accept Jesus or are luke warm are spit out period. Once again a threat is used and maybe it's not idle but *the technique* has been around a lot longer than Christianity.

Pascal's choice states we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by going with the flow and joining the church. In essence he said you're better off signing up because it's the religion that both promises *and* threatens the most... I find it frightening but not all that convincing.

IMO Pascal's choice means shut up, do what you're told and don't ask questions that we can't answer. That's fine until things become ridiculous which in my opinion they definitely have. C.S. Lewis on the other hand insists we must decide if Jesus is God or crazy and Jesus apparently makes the same demand... once again scary stuff! It's a catch 22 and a ferocious circular argument... you're with us or against us and if you're against us you're in deep, deep trouble. [Which brings to mind Beck's song ... "I'm a Loser Baby So Why Don't You Kill Me."](#)

~~Regarding C.S. Lewis' question, most people have no problem answering it in the prescribed manner but a few of us don't have such an easy time.~~

I don't know when I've heard a person of the book talk about pounding swords into plow shears... perhaps Isaiah was the only one to recommend it. Everything's a good, or necessary war around here... whether it was American Indians or Muslims today, most of my friends think war is a good work!

You call me wrong and deceived for not believing what religion has taught for thousands of years. I am one of a long line of men seeking to uncover what religion has been burning and burying *forever*. I bow before God and pray that the truth be revealed, just as hundreds of others have done... sometimes at considerable expense.

Some churches discourage female members from coloring or cutting their hair... they have their reasons, but I wonder if it changes the behavior of the gals? I'm pretty sure of one thing, it doesn't change their basic nature... for better or for worse, girls will be girls!

~~What's more ridiculous, that the world is billions of years old, or that its 10,000 years old? Well, if you ignore the scientific record and believe the Bible literally, then 10,000 years apparently make more sense.~~

~~History recycles and some would like it to recycle to the inquisition and the witch hunts. Most people disagree that this is happening, even as they whole heartedly support the west's latest crusade in the middle east. The reason for our crusade is often said to be a legitimate response to their jihad... but which came first the chicken or the egg?~~

~~Its one thing to disallow radical Islamic practices over here, its another to attempt to abolish them over there. Such might be a good thing in general, but we may be making things worse for them as well as for us by our violent interventions.~~

Funny how one denomination teaches you're only *likely* to be saved if you speak in tongues, while others call that heretical and put forth their own prescriptions. Sorting out each sects list of *essentials* and "wish lists" gets confusing! Don't expect to be saved if you drink whiskey, but wine is okay, others say you mustn't drink at all, and another claims any alcohol's okay in moderation. Most allow dancing, some don't and the same goes for music... my how the path to salvation is narrow, winding and looks like Swiss Cheese!

When the rapture takes place what happens to babies and children too small to be responsible for their decisions about Jesus? I think conventional wisdom says they'll be raptured, so is that one more trial for wicked parents to endure or should they be glad their children are spared?

~~Because my friends are so sure of their religion, they are also sure of their politics. Since the two are so intertwined, those who believe in Israel's inexorable right to exist, are sure we should crusade on their behalf.~~

Most of the people I know have been taught that their eternal salvation depends on them supporting Israel no matter what... that is until the time when the Jews have *served their purpose* and have to convert *orelse*. For the time being the crusade is against Muslims and the state of Israel is safe and supported unconditionally ... but for how long and then what?

~~If you were seriously interested in the truth, you would not dismiss archaeology and other sciences. If you put all your eggs in the baskets of apologetics and scientific creationism, you are ignoring possible truths.~~

When your hope for eternal life is dependent on accepting a religion's *absolute truths*, you will perform for *them* like a trained pony... or Doberman.

Was Pontius Pilate so wrong when he said "what is truth?" Pilate raised a valid question and it reminds me of the quote, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" which to some extent can be said for the truth. Ridiculous you say and I agree with you in principle but in actuality the truth though ideally constant and nonnegotiable, is usually based on one's point of view. There are some things that virtually everyone holds true but many other things that are nuanced by our circumstances.

When someone starts with "are you saved?" it's near impossible to have a spiritual discussion with them. As far as they're concerned the discussion should be within the framework of their religious views and it's predetermined that they're right and you're wrong. You're either with or against them, bound for heaven or bound for hell and your worth as a human being ultimately depends on whether or not you're on *the right team*.

Some more mundane things I've thanked God for are; for not falling on the ice and getting to the bathroom in the nick of time! Today I thanked him that my cookie didn't fall and crumble all over the place... that was a truly mundane prayer of thanks!

~~"God is closer to you than the beating of your heart" ...the Koran.~~

~~I believe in God the most and organized religion the least! I don't believe in master races, chosen people or holier than the rest religions.~~

~~Fire and brimstone preaching is basically a way to trigger a mob mentality response from the audience. Many listeners become excited, or incited, while the few who don't go along, are left scared and confused.~~

~~I love you, but will not be led by you, if you are lead by pastor Alfred E. Neuman.~~

"The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good things is my religion" ... Thomas Paine (another slaveholder.)

At Jericho, after marching around the city and blowing horns, which reportedly led to the walls falling down, Joshua and his army killed everyone... Joshua 6:16-17, 19, 21, 24, RSV) Joshua said to the people, "Shout; for the LORD has given you the city. And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction . . . But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." . . . Then they utterly destroyed all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and asses, with the edge of the sword . . . And they burned the city with fire, and all within it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD." Hmmm.

I've heard justifications of the above and have to wonder if it was *truly* God's will and commandment? *If* the Canaanites were as depraved as "reported" then why should I be surprised that God had the Israelites exterminate them? Along with the above, I've heard *apologists* state that the "the animals were killed and the property was burned so that Israel could not profit materially from the conquest." Why then, was the silver, gold, bronze and iron, put into the treasury of the "house of the Lord?"

Furthermore, the Israelites apparently exterminated a number of other depraved

tribes from the land of Canaan... was there really that much depravity or just not enough gold, silver and land to go around?

I wouldn't be surprised if the Gnostic Gospels are more truthful than the canonized versions. The latter are largely derived from a source known as Q, while the former have more variety and less magic, which might be why they were rejected!

I can neither *reflexively* believe scriptures canonized under a Roman emperor who butchered his way to power or accept verbatim the old testament, which justified the Hebrews extermination of people whose land's they were invading... somewhere along the line I have to say, really?

Are we any freer to question the church, then we were 200 years ago? We've made strides since the Inquisition, but it's often one step forward and two steps back. It seems like free exploration of spirituality began somewhere around the time of the "Age of Reason", and has sputtered mightily since then. There's a clash between fundamentalists and seekers with both camps wanting to declare victory but like most wars and though it's probably a mistake to insist on vanquishing "them", history shows that humans love it when their adversary is brought to his knees.

~~My point which I'm clumsy at making or nobody's interested in, is that despite magnificent speeches and extreme piety, you are fine with ruining those who won't submit to your religion. You may not do it personally but you support policies that do exactly that.~~

~~The Jewish people are frequently under attack in the nations in which they settle, accused of swindling the natives out of their fortunes. The Jewish people also I believe, have the highest average IQ of any "population." Human nature being what it is, one of our highest priorities seems to be enriching ourselves and the smarter you are the more likely you are to succeed if this is your goal.~~

~~Some churches believe the only way to go to heaven is to speak in tongues... how else they say, can you prove you're filled with the holy spirit. If this is not as wacky as Wahhabism, then I don't know what is... in any case, religious theocracies of any kind are a huge threat to personal freedom and always have been.~~

~~From day one, you have canonized what you wanted to canonize and that continues to this day... simply put, you canonize that which furthers your ability to maintain power and control over the sheep.~~

~~The last thing I want is a religious theocracy... be it Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or anything else.~~



Why was Mary Magdalene largely expunged from the Bible? I doubt it's because she was irrelevant... perhaps she was too relevant. Peter and Paul could not direct the church towards the goal line they envisioned if *a woman* other than Christ's mother was revered.

Since more American's attend church than Europeans, where fewer profess the faith, or in Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish or Hindu nations? The Bible tells us what to expect...

What about the "War Scroll" found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the battle between the sons of light and the sons of darkness? Conventional wisdom is that Christians and Jews are the former and Muslims and their allies are the former. There are however other possible interpretations.

Because my friends are so sure about religion, they're also sure about politics. Since the two are intertwined, Christians vote for us to crusade on Israel's behalf, but what happens to the Jews when the current crusade's over?

Organized religion is the dark underbelly of spirituality but there's been an insatiable demand for it since time immemorial... we have a need and it fills it, or at least tries.

The religions I'm familiar with seems to have borrowed for everything from doctrine to dress and holidays from preceding religions. Most people seem to need structure and guidance in their spiritual journey... maybe we're just lazy. That creates jobs for those willing to shepherd their fellows along the winding road to salvation and the more twisted they can make that road the better their job security! For other people *the search* may or may not be aided by wholly men and we prefer to search in other ways. We're still want to be the clay and not the potter but we're not so quick to jump on the bandwagon of religions that damn you for failing to submit to their interpretation of God and the universe.

After being nearly shipwrecked Ben wrote to his wife something about, lighthouses being more useful than churches"... hmmm.

Went to the Unitarian church with my Dad... the Sunday program they handed me said they have no creed, but it did list their "By-Laws"... hmmm, it's a list too, isn't it? I found the day's service as satisfying as the Christian churches I attend with my wife...no more, no less.

Believe what you want but don't impose it on others. I believe in God the most and religion the least! Nor do I believe in master races, chosen people or in anyone being *holier than thou*.

If you're chosen then the rest of us should follow your orders but if you're not, are you perpetuating a fraud or just having a little fun at our expense?

When there's an interfaith marriage and in the absence of a highly religious father, the children tend to be raised in the religion of the wealthier grandmother... granny pulls the strings.

Some men are content to let the women go to church but they're willing to do the dirty work, when required. Their way of practicing religion is being willing to kill for it when told to. So even though to the pastor's chagrin they're not in a pew on Sunday, they're accepted because he knows *he can rely on them* should their services be *needed* in the future. To some extent we're natural born killers and when *called upon* to unleash destruction some men find it most exciting.

How can one be a Christian when no "accredited" church admits you unless you accept the Nicene Creed? I'm trying not to get hung up on labels but would like to have a faith community which is why I'm interested in an online church for somewhat like minded individuals.

Humans frequently claim *title* to God's will on their own behalf, leading to oppression and to cut-throats lording over us.

~~Ironically, religion is the first thing some will kill for and the last thing other's will... not surprisingly, the more fundamentalist one is, the more likely one is to belong to the former category, at least that's my opinion. Moderates are less likely to think their view of religion and spirituality is so absolutely correct as to be willing to kill others over it.~~

It's been said that starting at the time of Reagan, the right stole God and the left stole Green. There's been a contentious debate ever since, with each side blaming the other for worshipping idols and leading us down the road to ruin. Maybe with the passing of the old guard, things will change... I'm semi-optimistic.

Are you a Christian... well the short list is the Nicene Creed, the long list adds how to vote and who to invade!

~~My wife would like for us to tithe but for various reasons I resist. I don't support how they use the funds, we are already taxed at what I consider an incredibly high rate and am not big on the~~

church's "prosperity doctrine", those who give will be repaid many times over. Since the government through various taxes already takes most of my income, that should be enough to pay for the poor, national infrastructure and defense.

It'd be nice if religion lost its power to foment war but that's not a popular notion.

The church says the man is the head of the house unless he doesn't walk with the lord. In other words obey the church leaders or you're not fit to lead your family. Abide by that if you want but I'll resist the scam as best I can.

I'm not saying that people who belong to an organized religion are fascists, I'm saying that their leadership typically is and usually leads the flock in a similar direction. After attempting to "fix" the broken souls of "nonbelievers" the leadership often instructs its flock send the poor devils to their ultimate punishment, and do serve anything of value that they "leave behind."

Easter is here again and I hear the miraculous stories of resurrection, multiplying loaves, wine and fish... Noah and his exploits and the other wonders. I'm reminded that most people believe fairy tales over reason any day, leading often to history taking a terrible course. If you are such loving people, why have you been at war for two thousand years? Why did we exterminate the inhabitants of this continent and enslave the people of another?

"It is the duty of the Christian not to succeed, but to fail cheerfully"... Robert Louis Stevenson. This may or may not be biblical, but it's certainly contradicts the prosperity doctrine being preached across the land to so many eager listeners.

Can you love the Palestinians and not hate the Jews, can you love America, but not support its wars, can you love a drug addict and hate his habit?

Should we all confess our sins to one another, we'd all laugh at each other for our lack of originality"... Khalil Gibran

There are forces in the universe far beyond my comprehension... in fact there's not that much I do understand! I admit it, have an inquiring mind and don't want to be led merrily along by others. I want the open mindedness of a child with the benefits of a lifetime of experience which tells me not be foolish, idiotic or led by demagogues.

"Religions are all alike - founded upon fables and mythologies"... Thomas Jefferson

Curiosity versus assumptions is what separates organized religion from seekers of spiritual truths. Religions discourage curiosity, unless they're controlling its direction and they drill the flock to accept rulebooks which they call the *truth*.

Curiosity can kill a cat or set it free and religion wants you to be an *inside* cat that doesn't look out the window and eats only what's in its bowl.

When your hope for eternity depends on accepting religions' unchallengeable truths you will perform for *your handlers* like a Doberman.

I don't know if she was playing the Christian rap for her enjoyment or my *benefit* but its effect wasn't positive. The combination of two things I don't like, rap music and badgering were unlikely to bring me to the fold! As a young evangelist she'll have to learn to tailor her approach to her audience... as *bad* as it sounds, some need to be evangelized with reason... if there is a such thing ☺

Is Satan bound for 1,000 years, then allowed to escape and reek havoc again before finally being thrown in the lake of fire and destroyed once and for all? This is an interesting story... it shows that God sentences the fallen angel to 1,000 year sentence at first and then destroys *him* once and for all when he re-offends. Perhaps our justice system can learn from this... maybe Hitler deserves 500 years and GW IMO about 75... but you prefer to give him medals and accolades.

**You accuse me of using the Ishmael factor as an excuse for my excesses, so I won't use that excuse. It doesn't matter, you'll accuse me of transgressions whenever I deviate from your norms anyway, so what's the use?**

**I'd as soon listen to the worst rap music as to the famous televangelists... they're equally offensive.**

I don't know if the Arabs and the Israelis will ever reconcile but I want to reconcile with those around me. My friends are; fundamentalist Christians, blacks, Jews and others who seldom share my views. For *the most part* I keep my mouth shut, try not to argue and silently abide to my principles and beliefs... at least that's my version!

**“Conscience” ... does the root in any way mean “with science”, or “against science?” Either way, we shouldn’t abandon reason and fall for ancient superstitions, creeds and animosities.**

Maybe the Jews are the chosen people and maybe God does his work with the help of; Hollywood directors, bankers and lawyers...? **The other day I heard on TBN that they’re 0.05% of the population and have won 20% of Nobel Prizes. That’s quite a track record and speaking of track records, it could be pointed out that blacks hold the majority of those in track...maybe they’re chosen too?**

~~**Why shouldn't "thou shalt not kill", mean anything other than, "thou shalt not kill?"**~~

**Is it heresy to wonder if everyone, or no one gets an *afterlife*. Well here’s another one, did the writers of Scripture actually transcribe the words of God... or something else?**

~~The apostle Paul seems to have been a fan of the book of Enoch... this isn't surprising, since it is rich in stories of fallen angels and murder. Just his cup of tea, and exactly what he needed to scare the daylights out of his flock.~~

Was Moses with his 10 Commandments simply trying to keep his unruly tribes under control, or did God truly talk to him from the burning bush? We may never know exactly what kind of man he was but his impact on history is undeniable!

Was Moses really found floating in a basket or was he as Sigmund Freud hypothesized, “Moses was not Hebrew, but actually born into Ancient Egyptian nobility and was perhaps a follower of Akhenaten, an ancient Egyptian monotheist, or perhaps Akhenaten himself” (Wikipedia), and what did Isaac Asimov say about the origins of Moses?

IMO Christians have been so affected by the words and images of their overlords, that many live tortured lives. For 2000 years the church has collected tithes from its flock, much of which has been used to produce monumental structures and depictions of hell, damnation and tortured sinners ... a most effective propaganda effort if you ask me! To this day, the church continues its program of misinformation and its attempt to hide or distort the findings of; Biblical archaeology, Apocryphal writings, Gnosticism and so called *heretical* views such as those of Galleleo and many others that have since been proven true.

I’m told that adult thinking’s a mistake if it results in not believing the Bible. People seem to accept this but I hope on some level they question the concept. What’s wrong with adults thinking like adults? There’s nothing wrong with putting on our thinking caps and doing a bit of due diligence, even in the sphere of religion! I no more accept Santa and the Easter bunny than take Bible stories as the gospel truth, but I respect many of the Bible’s teachings... they are true for the ages.

Telling people to think like children is an insult and ploy to keep adults from standing up to the earthly powers and princes who rule us. We’re told that using our heads is heresy and many have burned at the

stake for that *crime*. Books contradicting the church were also burned... how can people blindly follow such a system? They employ insults, threats, ostracizing and violence to maintain their power and these are effective weapons! Since we're such social beings and have a strong desire to fit in, the direst of their weapons are rarely used anymore but they're on the shelf... just in case.

Judaism's a schism of earlier religions. Christianity's a schism from Judaism, Protestantism's a schism from Catholicism and on and on it goes!

The Jewish people are risk takers and as such they often reap rewards but they also suffer great tragedies. Between; slavery, exile, persecution, inquisition, pogroms or the Holocaust, they've probably had more trials and tribulations than any other people. So with all due respect I ask the Jewish people, why have you had this tragic history? You've also reached pinnacles like no others and prospered in *adopted lands* while natives have not so jealousy, greed and avarice are part of the problem but is there more to it? Whether or not Baron Rothschild said, "it doesn't matter who runs the country as long as you control the money supply", the Jewish people have risen to positions of tremendous power and influence in the lands they've landed in. I think the frequent backlash they've been subjected to is wrong but not a big surprise.

In the epilogue of Charla's Children, Charla shows her stern side when she quotes her good friend Dr. George Wood, "formula for failure in his teaching on the feeding of the five thousand: "Look at the size of the task, the little you have, and leave Jesus out of the picture." After writing a book about great inspiration and miracles, she's compelled to remind us that without Christ everything we do is a formula for failure. Call it a warning, threat or reminder if you want, I see it as a customary tactic of cultist.

I enjoyed her book and applaud the work she's done but find her miraculous claims possible but dubious. Without unbiased substantiators why would someone with an inquiring mind not suspect a bit of exaggeration, coincidences as well as the legitimate fruits of her labor? As far as miraculously getting people and materials past guards and bureaucrats, being a missionary might have been helpful and though she might claim just the opposite in mostly Catholic Mexico, I doubt that the average official saw it in their interest to impeded her. Due to the good work she was doing and their own fear of offending God, it's no surprise she was able to find ways to get things across the border.

Christians with their superb *kill ratio*, may have killed more people than any other religious group, which is one reason I question "the church." I wonder less about Jesus than I do about Christians... but I wonder about Jesus too. Could the miracles be tricks or psychology, was he an ultranationalist or did he love everyone equally... questions keep popping into my head. Was he the leader of his movement, a splinter of the Essenes, a figurehead used by others or what?

Televangelists? I see little humility in them other than the false variety...

We have been taught that science is political (surely it is to a degree) and that mythology is the truth. Church and family begin pounding religious myths and superstitions into our heads shortly after birth, making it difficult to look at the world unbiasedly later on. Instead of taking positive lessons from

religion, questioning pseudo-history and being skeptical of possible fairytales, we're taught to do the opposite!

When someone starts with, "aren't you saved?", it's almost impossible to have a discussion debate with them. As far as they're concerned any discussion must be within the framework of their theology and it's a *given* that only they are right. You with them or against them, bound for heaven or hell and your worth as a person depends largely on whether or not you're on *the team*.

Fundamentalists from all religions deny the validity of any spiritual view of the world other than their own. In my neck of the woods, most churches teach that you cannot accept the positive moral messages of Jesus without also accepting the associated teachings of Paul. This despite the fact that Paul never knew Jesus except in *a vision*... how do we know Paul was completely truthful and didn't have his own agenda? Why were the Gnostic gospels of disciples like; Thomas, Mary and Philip repressed by Constantine and other hijackers? The fact that the Gnostic gospels had to be buried in caves to save them from destruction *indicates* that church leaders were out to *design* Christianity in an image of their choosing.

Religionists are so serious when going to service because they expect to receive marching designed to help them dominate the world. They say, "victory, victory, victory", all the time and not necessarily in a good way.

According to the pastor there's no jury trial come the judgment day and he may be right. Man has to accept God's decision, albeit with moaning and gnashing of teeth and that makes some sense too. Furthermore, those who haven't accepted Christ have no hope but the pastor vacillates about the fate of those who never heard his message...

There are so many inconsistencies in the Bible its not funny... the one I heard the other day is the two possibly conflicting versions of the creation of man and woman. Genesis chapters one and two has the details... in one version, God creates man and woman at the same time, in the second, Eve's created from Adam's rib.

It's *clear* that if I don't believe the right things and have the right *affiliation* then I'm a bad guy going to a bad place. If your attempts to straighten me out fail, I'm a lost cause unworthy of equal treatment under the law. This has happened throughout history to those not belonging to a cult powerful enough to protect its members. Roman persecuted Christians and after the empire converted, it persecuted non-Christians. It's as wrong now as it ever was or will be in the future if and when other cults replace those currently running the show.

The televangelist addresses the audience, "there's somebody out with a bad back who will be healed today." It's a time tested promotional technique and it still gets results!

I respect the female mind but think women tend are even more superstitious than men. IMO they embrace charismatic leaders and ignore reason even more than men. Maybe organized religions offer women some protection from men, especially if they conform. Men are slightly less superstitious and

sheep-like than women when it comes to trusting their brains. I hope I don't disrespect people who accept religious authority verbatim, but neither do I respect that attitude!

According to the National Geographic Channel on December 8, 2008, the oldest known fragment of the Book of Revelation, says the number of the beast is 616, not 666... hmmm? This is just one of many challenges to the churches claims of the Bible's absolute inerrancy. On a related note, many scholars believe that either of these numbers is applicable to the Emperor Nero and that the warning was for their time, but who's to say?

... The latest Virgin Mary sighting making the news, occurred in an MRI cross section of someone's brain, previous ones have been on potato chips etc.... hmmm. I won't describe the image that appeared on a dogs rear that made the news recently.

Is genealogy a substitute for religion? Do genealogists worship their ancestors or just recognize and honor them?

In his attempt to destroy the "godless communists" Hitler killed millions of Russians. Many people claim that Islam is satanic and that Allah is not the God that Christians and Jews worship. Modern day *crusaders* are as willing to kill Muslims and jihadis are willing to kill Christians. It reminds me that during America's Indian wars, many Americans said "the only good Indian's a dead Indian."

Pontius Pilate is criticized for asking "What is truth?" but was his question meritless? Sometimes the "truth" turns out to be a lie and half-truths masquerading as the whole truth abound. People rallying around their version of the truth have killed millions in order to perpetuate tall tales... just ask Galileo.

The ancient Egyptians were said to be preoccupied with the afterlife, which to them may have seemed like retirement. Meanwhile we prepare and prepare for our *golden years* which don't always turn out so great.

Some of the more mundane things I've thanked God for are; for not falling on the ice, getting to the bathroom in the nick of time and for having half a brain... cause its better than nothing 😊

For all those from religion that believe they're God's gift to the world, please reconsider. We'll all get along better if we consider ourselves equal in God's eyes instead of "chosen above others."



"I'm not ready to go, but I'm prepared to die"... is a familiar theme, and a powerful statement of confidence but what gets me, is how so many pious folks are willing to be judge and jury for the rest of us. They'll try straightening you out but if you don't bow before their idol, they can make life very difficult!

I hate to be a wet blanket, but the council of Nicaea, Constantine and Paul's Christianity says it all. If the elitist councilmen, the warlike emperor and the revisionary writer don't cast light on their motives, then the gnostic gospels and Nag Hammadi Library they tried to destroy, do...

What about the Apostle Paul, the emperor Constantine and King James? They played pivotal roles in canonizing and spreading the accepted Bible of today. Were they honorable men without biases and personal agendas? Did they have all the facts and were they truly in touch with God? We don't know a great deal about Paul but it's logical for a rational person to question his supposed encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. As for Emperor Constantine and King James, there's considerably more in the historical record and neither of these men was a saint.

What I want to know is when the "first are last and the last are first", will the new *first* treat the new *last* like they had been treated? Will it simply be a case of the pendulum swinging or will there be a new paradigm? Will everyone be treated equal or will there just be a new princely class? You know, "meet the old boss, he's the same as the old boss." Speaking of princes, what's so majestic about the princely class anyway... not much if you ask me!

**All those people out there working for the return of Jesus or the return of the Mahdi, both of which seem to require an apocalypse, might just get their wish... after all they're working extremely hard!**

The west wants a rapid "Islamic reformation" resulting in Muslims submitting to western values or they'll be beaten into submission. I don't think that's realistic. Was Islam born from the Arabians desire to counter Judeo-Christianity in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Were these tribes dissatisfied with the Judeo-Christians proselytizing and want to maintain their own identity? Then as now Christians, Jews and Muslims were fighting instead of coexisting but that no surprise because ultimately cults always seek power. Now as in *days of old when knights were bold*, Christians and Jews believe their religions are patently superiors to the "upstart" Islam... Muslims beg to differ and "state their case" as violently as their competitors.

A while back our neocon leaders thought that a nice little war in Iraq would take care of the Muslim problem, instead our *problems* may have grown even worse.

**The Islamic fascists are murderous terrorists, but what about those who have invaded and occupied Muslim lands? If you could somehow ask the civilians who've been killed who the terrorists are, what would they say?**

The pastor's assertion that the US was formed partially to eliminate Islam is probably misinformation contrary to the Constitution and to George Washington's farewell address.

God or not, we'd invent one. A species with self-awareness might otherwise find the notion of its own rotting corpses too disturbing. Through religion we're able to put it in *perspective*... dry bones coming to life gives us hope and is easier to accept than being consumed by worms... that drive us crazy.

Saw a picture of a Marine Corps sword on a recruiting truck the other day, sporting the star of David and wondered if it's always been there? Reminds me that many law enforcement departments wear the star of David and I wonder if this has always been the case? When it comes to U.S. military uniforms I think they go with the five sided star...symbols are an important way to influence people and there seems to be some competition between the two stars.

**Maybe I kind of believe in reincarnation because in a way, genetically we're vague reincarnations of our ancestors. Exact reincarnations are something else, but we're partial reincarnations of our ancestors in mind and body. This isn't the kind of reincarnation *true believers* espouse but it's the closest I get to it. In as much as we marry among our own people, we're likely to look, act and perhaps even think like them, so maybe we are them. Heck, maybe we're robots... maybe they were too😊**

**The "perfect moments" we have don't last forever, time doesn't allow that. They last as long as our memories which isn't very long, what**

with our lives being *like a vapor*. Good things should be passed on to others, that's the closest thing to permanence we have.

I like the moon because unlike the sun, you can stare at it without burning your eyes. The man in the moon just smiles because unlike the sun, he's not responsible for our very existence!

There were 33 people murdered at Virginia Tech... in most cases, the lethal wound was a relatively small bullet wound to the head. It reminds me of a crime show where they said, "the body looked perfect except for a small hole in the chest"... sadly, that's all it takes.

"God is closer to you than the beating of your heart"...the Koran

"I like watching the puddles gather rain"... Blind Melon

"What does God the Father look like? Although I've never seen Him, I believe - as with the Holy Spirit - He looks like Jesus looked on earth"... Benny Hinn. Hmmm.

